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26 February 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR; Deputy Director (Administration)

SUBJECT: Functions of the Office of General Counsel


1. The following is suggested as a brief outline of the activities of the General Counsel's Office in the event you wish to discuss them with Mr. Taber:

2. The Office of General Counsel is responsible for handling all legal matters arising in connection with the official business of the Agency. In practice, this includes on the overt side the handling and interpretation of legislation and the legal aspects of legislative liaison and the legal aspects of budget and fiscal problems, personnel matters, such as leave, travel, retirement, compensation, insurance, separations, loyalty programs, staff supervision of the legal aspects of supply, procurement, and general services, including the specific review of negotiated contracts. A general function unique to this Agency is advice on the legal implications of the responsibility of the Director for protection of intelligence source and method.

3. On the covert side the function of greatest importance is advice on the proper utilization of unvouchered funds. An allied function also unique, at least in scope, to this Agency is the protection of Government interest in funds, property and control in covert operations where the Government interest cannot outwardly appear. In addition to these basic responsibilities, covert operations bring up legal problems of every nature and type and often in an entirely new form without clear precedent. The scope is worldwide and involves the application not only of United States laws, Federal and State, but also national and occasionally international law.

4. The aim of the Office is through staff assistance to solve the legal blocks encountered in approved operations with due regard to the protection of United States interests and of the Director in the exercise of his responsibilities.

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Lawrence R. Houston
General Counsel

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